

There is a disparity that is troublesome if we are to arrive at a fair, responsible, and accurate measurement to establish an effective prevailing wage that is fair to the worker, but more importantly, and as importantly, fair to the producer so that we get out of this competitive disadvantage the Senator from Georgia has recognized and sees as critically important.

In other words, if this data source represented agriculture prevailing wage, which in my opinion it does not, the prevailing crop rates I mentioned for Ohio would be at least 19 cents an hour higher than the AgJOBS minimum wage even in 2006 before we tamped it down in the law. The projected Ohio prevailing crop wage in 2010, based on the data source, would be \$10.33 per hour compared to the AgJOBS minimum wage of \$9.29.

In all sincerity, I offer to the Senator from Georgia a time for us to look at numbers and do some comparisons. There is a disparity. I know what the bill does because the bill is accurately and effectively represented in these charts because we knew what the effected adverse wage was going to be, and there is a very clear projection line. What we do not know are the indices given and provided as it relates to the Chambliss amendment.

I will spend the weekend looking at it and looking at those numbers. They do concern me. It is important we get it right, not that we want to treat anyone in a disadvantaged way, but what we do has to be accurate, it has to create stability, it has to take away the competitive disadvantage the Senator from Georgia is talking about, that is real today in this disparity between those H-2A workers and, if you will, the undocumented workers out there in the American workforce that the provision of the bill that deals with agriculture attempts to get its arms around and legalize through the blue card transition period the Senator and I have spoken to.

It is a very important part of the bill. Both the Senator from Georgia and I have been concerned for some time and have compared numbers about an American agricultural work base built on a faulty employment base. You cannot be working 75 percent undocumented workers and be wholly dependent upon them to bring the perishable crop to the market and then have them swept out from under you.

Yet we also know that when there is 1.2 to 1.5 million people in the American agricultural workforce that are foreign nationals, yet annually, the H-2A as a program only effectively identifies 42,000 to 45,000, something was and is dramatically wrong. That is why the Senator is here with his amendment. That is why I am here with a major reform package within the bill. We both agree that the wage part of this is skewed. That is why we rolled it back dramatically and we are proposing establishing a prevailing wage. And he has proposed a prevailing wage.

We have to get the numbers right. I disagree with his numbers. It is important that in the effort to bring stability and equity we get them right.

I hope the Senate would get the Chambliss amendment, stay with the freeze that is actually the 2002 wage scale for 3 years, while we get the numbers right as it relates to the effective establishment of a prevailing wage.

In the end, I would argue that during that period of time we have substantially lessened the competitive disadvantage and improved the overall wage base for agricultural workers in a sense of equity and balance.

We will be back to this amendment, I understand, Monday afternoon to debate it before a vote on Monday evening at 5:30. It is a challenge for all of us. More than one Senator over the course of the last week has said this is a very complicated bill. And the area that Senator CHAMBLISS and I have ventured into is a very complicated portion of the bill.

I know what the bill does because I helped write it and spent a good number of years attempting to negotiate it. I am yet to clearly understand what I believe the Senator from Georgia is attempting to do as to the accuracy of his numbers and what they would mean on a State-by-State basis based on the indices he proposes to be used if this were to become law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I do not intend to take but a few seconds to not necessarily respond to my friend from Idaho, who correctly states we have been working together in trying to solve a very difficult problem relative to reform of the H-2A program. He has been at it for a long time. My first vote on this was 11 years ago as a Member of the House of Representatives. That is how long I have been working on this issue. And we have yet to get the H-2A program reformed.

I am very hopeful, as we go through this, we will have an opportunity to look at the numbers. I did not even mention prevailing wage numbers for Ohio or any other State. Obviously, I am happy to look at those. But the numbers are what they are. And the Senator from Idaho, I assume, agrees with me and is going to vote with me because he said he wants a prevailing wage, and I am seeking to amend this bill to get a prevailing wage in a bill that has an adverse effect wage rate in it.

But seriously, the numbers are what they are. I think we can agree that the prevailing wage rate is higher than the minimum wage, and it is less than the adverse effect wage rate today virtually in every State and in every location in the country. Our farmers are very much at a disadvantage today, and it is not like they are not willing to pay a fair wage.

You are right, most of our employees work on a piece rate. They cut a buck-

et of squash, they take it to the wagon, and they get a chip. And that chip may be worth \$2 or it may be worth \$5. That is the way most agricultural workers are paid: on a piece-rate basis. But there has to be a floor. They have to be paid a certain amount per hour under the law, and that is the way it should be. And that is what we are going to be talking about.

But the numbers are what they are. And the numbers speak for themselves. We look forward to debating in much more detail on Monday. Our purpose today on both ends was simply to get the amendment laid down. We will be back Monday to engage in more extensive debate.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5:30 on Monday, May 22, the Senate proceed to a vote in relation to the Chambliss amendment No. 4009; provided further that the time from 5 to 5:30 be equally divided between Senator CHAMBLISS and the Democratic manager or his designee. I further ask consent that following that vote, the Senate proceed immediately to a vote in relation to the Ensign amendment No. 4076, as modified. Finally, I ask consent that no second degrees be in order to either amendment prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE DESERT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to bring recognition to one of the most majestic places in Nevada—the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. On Saturday, May 20 the refuge will have been in existence for 80 years. Established in 1936 during the Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Desert National Wildlife Refuge is a key part of the National Wildlife Refuge System that protects sensitive lands and species throughout our great Nation.

Covering 1.5 million acres of the Mojave Desert in southern Nevada, the Desert refuge is the largest National Wildlife Refuge in the continental United States. The Mojave Desert is known for its wide variety of geology, plant life, and animal life. The Desert National Wildlife Refuge epitomizes this diversity. It contains six different mountain ranges and four different habitat types. With an average rainfall between 4 and 15 inches, elevations ranging from 2,500 ft to 10,000 ft, and over 300 different animal species, the